

Smoke without fire

Is Margaret Alva joining the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)? It does demand suspension of belief but newspaper reports have come out saying that she, along with her second son Nivedit, is proposing to dump the Congress party and join the BJP. However, denials followed almost instantly, so this might be a case of smoke without fire.

Alva, who has been a union cabinet minister and governor in various Congress regimes, has never had any charges of corruption against her, has been an adoring follower of Indira Gandhi and a colleague of Rajiv Gandhi. Her other son Nikhil, is one of Rahul Gandhi's closest advisors and obviously this information has been floated with Nikhil Alva as the target, not Mrs Alva, who, from all accounts, is leading a quiet retired life. However, she has hit back with aplomb. "I have had no 'negotiations' or intention of leaving the party, least of all joining the BJP to which many politicians have migrated to protect themselves. Each party has its identity and ideology. I cannot under any circumstances exchange mine for that of the BJP," she tweeted, earlier this week.

No more than two

A two child norm is likely to be the next initiative of the BJP, making it statutory for all candidates who want to hold government jobs, including public office at any level, to have a maximum of two children. The idea has already been rolled out by the Assam government led by the BJP for applicants for government jobs after 2021. Assam is also the progenitor of the National Register of Citizens idea.

**OPINION**

RAVI BATRA

America's primary foreign goal is a terror-free world

Permit me a brief relevant sentence about me: I am a New Yorker, having left India when I was 7 years old, and on 9/11 I tasted the dust of WTC. Since then, I see serving the "best interests" of the United States in first eradicating terror — as there are no rights and no law, if terror reigns. I am bold enough to assert that that ought to be America's Primary Foreign Policy goal: a Terror-Free World. While the title of today's Hearing is "Human Rights in South Asia," its been truncated by some to be the "Kashmir Hearing." To them, I say, why not call it "Can We Let Terror Reign?" or better yet, "Let's Forget History & Public Safety." The world is changing, and so is terror. It used to be that an "insult" could trigger a lone-wolf terrorist. After the demented massacre of peaceful worshippers in Christ Church, a Billionaire's adult kids blew themselves up on Easter Sunday in Sri Lanka, thereby trying to make it a Holy War — a war we must not permit to even get started. Terror is bad enough; we need not drag Religion into it. This begs the question of "sequencing," for as we put our socks on before our shoes, we must first eradicate terror and protect public safety, so law and order may govern society, and any violation of rights — be they constitutional, statutory, contractual or human rights — the courts can fashion a just remedy one-case at a time.

America is, and must remain, a force for good, and our precious freedoms, which we all take for granted — the very nectar of American Exceptionalism born of our cherished separated powers regime — is why the good folks around the world love us. But freedoms require, as we well know thanks to Abraham Lincoln, sometimes even a Civil War, with suspension of habeas corpus, to first keep the nation united, restore public safety, and only then, can a government "of, by and for" the people govern justly. The United States has two co-equal political branches. A fact often not well comprehended by nations around the world. Yet, to them, we, the United States, the Executive and the Congress — have to make clear that we are a friend of South Asia in general, and the Sub-Continent in particular. India is why Columbus discovered the Americas in 1492, and hence, India can claim to be America's birth mother. The Indian Constitution was drafted by a Columbia Law School graduate, Dr B R Ambedkar, who liberally took our Constitution and Supreme Court precedents and wrote India's Constitution. It is this singular fact that we can root our relationship in, and with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's promise of "indivisibility" made in his Joint Address to Congress, let freedom ring all over South Asia. Pakistan's celebrity PM Imran Khan is a man I respect and have much hope in, for he knows what a rules-based order is, given his super-star status of a cricketer. He knows that Terrorists have taken residence in his country, and are a threat to our service members, as well as his neighbors in Afghanistan and India. That nations use Terror as part of statecraft cannot be permitted. I'd argue even more: counterbalance is a failed pillar of statecraft, and ought to be abandoned.

Afghanistan

It is clear to me for some time that we must maintain our military base in Afghanistan permanently, even before I visited Tajikistan in May 2019, where I had candid discussions with Foreign Minister Sirojiddin Muhriddin, and then spoke at the High Level joint conference on Counter-Terrorism convened by Tajikistan and UN-OCT. We have remained in Germany and Japan for 70 years. If we are to contain Terror successfully in South Asia by "nipping it in the bud," and not wait for another attack in Times Square, we must be close enough to act.

Kashmir

Watching Brexit is torture. The Partition of 1947 was much worse, and Lord Mountbatten, and his erstwhile Major Brown, played fast, loose and dirty. I wrote an OpEd that was published in various papers, entitled: "Kashmir - Heaven on Earth; Only If You Remember Louisiana and Alaska." A simple point worth making: Kashmir was attached to India by a legal Decree duly signed by its then-Hindu ruler, Maharaja Hari Singh, several months after the needlessly bloody Partition when tens of millions were killed. Like our acquisition of Louisiana from Napoleon, and Alaska from the Czar of Russia, no then resident of Louisiana or Alaska could force us, the United States, to hold an election so the residents could become an independent nation. Their choice was to "love us," or "leave us." Same applied to India in 1947. What has transpired, to be kind, is nothing short of malpractice of relevant leaders, well recorded in history, with ordinary people who just want their version of the "American Dream" paying a heavy price.

Like Lincoln, PM Modi took extraordinary steps: first, legal amendments to have legal authority, and then, second, installing a massive force to prevent fatalities in Kashmir from motivated fire-fights by cross-border or home-grown Terrorists. He said he did this to bring the promise of equal rights and freedoms to all Indians. His actions on August 5, 2019 were judicious, as they were careful. No war broke out. Terrorists were immobilized, as communications and internet were cut off. India, it seems, learned from her Mumbai Terror attack. Indeed, landing at JFK airport, when standing in line for immigration inspection, there is no phone service or internet connection. Safety matters. Indeed, I owe India an apology, as when she suffered her Mumbai Terror attack on November 26, 2008, when Jews and Americans were singled out for death by Pakistan-based Terrorists, I joined in arguing for "restraint." I was wrong. Terror needs to be eradicated, so our rights and freedoms mean something.

Edited excerpts from a testimony by Ravi Batra, Chair, National Advisory Council for South Asian Affairs in Washington to the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific and Nonproliferation on: "Human Rights in South Asia: Views from the State Department and the Region" 22 October

DID THEY REALLY SAY THAT?

"The observance of Diwali is an important reminder of the significance of one of our Nation's core tenets - religious liberty. My administration will continue to defend the rights enshrined in our Constitution that enable people of all faiths to worship according to their beliefs and conscience"

US President Donald Trump post Diwali celebrations at his Oval office, Friday, October 25



ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA

Mohammed Yousof Tarigami, 72, a four-time legislator of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly and a member of the central committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) was recently in Delhi for a check-up at AIIMS. In an interview to Archis Mohan, Tarigami talks about the situation in Kashmir and how it needs to be addressed. Edited excerpts.

'Kashmiris have been humiliated'

With the date (October 31) when Jammu and Kashmir loses its statehood and gets bifurcated approaching, what is the situation on the ground?

The situation is very painful. It is unbelievable for those who have not experienced it before. It is a terrible period for Kashmiris. It could have serious implications on the future of our country, its polity and ethos. It's been 80-days (since the clampdown). Life has been paralysed. Schools, colleges and universities are open but without teachers and students. We have seen turmoil earlier as well. For the past 30 years, since 1989, there is virtually bloodbath going on, lots of violence and destruction. But the shock and distrust that our population is facing now is unprecedented.

The entire community of the people of Kashmir, irrespective of earlier divides, like mainstream and separatist, this or that

group, strongly feels that we have been humiliated. Those who have stood for the country's unity, who have sacrificed, faced bullets, as also the common people, feel betrayed today. Here lies the danger ahead. It needs to be taken care of urgently.

But isn't lack of protests in Kashmir a sign of normalcy?

How many times have you seen protests inside the Tihar jail? Come visit Kashmir and see for yourself. I am not cooking up stories. I am a responsible citizen.

A basic principle of democracy is to make the government accountable. In our case, Article 370 has been abrogated arbitrarily. The Constitution in J&K has been dismantled, the state itself bifurcated but they claim they are integrating the people of J&K with the rest of the country. Is this integration? I do not know my fate when I return to

Matchmakers for NGOs & volunteers

Founded in 2017, Those In Need is trying to bridge the gap between volunteers scouting for work in the development sector and NGOs looking for the right candidates for the job, writes **Sneha Bhattacharjee**

Abhishek Saini worked as a senior analyst with a mobile marketing company. His penchant for volunteering made him realise the dearth of opportunities in the social sector. As he began his hunt for the right kind of service, he homed in on the gap that existed between professionals who couldn't volunteer because searching for an NGO based on their skillsets was cumbersome.

Not that the NGOs could connect with the volunteers easily. Precisely why Saini decided to team up with his former colleague Shreya Bhatia to co-found organisation, Those In Need, in March 2017. This New Delhi-based organisation acts like a matchmaking platform for the NGOs and volunteers leveraging on artificial intelligence to do the job. "We provide

for volunteers with appropriate skills a difficult and expensive task.

Both Saini and Bhatia hold degrees in Economics and have been active in the development sector. Reminiscing his journey of establishing Those In Need, Saini says "At the outset, organisations were solving the challenge that we aimed to in a traditional way. However, we were keen on leveraging tech to solve the challenge for NGOs and volunteers efficiently and effectively."

Having no tech background, Saini learnt about WordPress with the help of online videos and launched their first WordPress website. Bhatia, the other co-founder, helped with onboarding new NGOs and volunteers. Together the two have helped the organisation build a strong network of 160+ NGOs and societies, and 6,000+ individuals.

It surely wasn't as easy a ride as Saini describes his journey. From being told that their idea lacked merit, to finding it challenging to explain the potential of their idea to their family and friends, to not finding funding — they have faced it all. "Convincing parents to leave a well settled job was the biggest task. But our belief in the idea helped us sail past all the negativity," says Saini

adding "we pooled our savings from our Provident Fund."

So how does Those In Need work? The platform allows NGOs to create events for their ongoing projects. Volunteers choose the NGO they wish to support and partici-

CHECKLIST**WHY WE LOST: WHAT LEADERS SAID ABOUT HARYANA, MAHA BYPOLLS**

■ Kailash Vijayavargiya, BJP General Secretary: "I can clearly see the shortcomings in our management of the Haryana elections. The BJP rebels fought elections and we failed to persuade them (to pull out)..."

■ Bhupinder Singh Hooda, former chief minister Congress, Haryana: "We would have won a full majority if we had more time."

■ Congress leader, Ghulam Nabi Azad: "The Congress would have performed much better if Mr Hooda had been in action six months earlier"

■ Chief Minister of Punjab and Congress leader, Amrinder Singh: "We really won the show, with a little more effort we would have won."

■ Eknath Khadse, BJP leader: "I retained the seat in hostile conditions for several years, but the party lost it despite the situation being favourable. We will find out the reasons behind the defeat...I am unhappy that the BJP could not get desired results

in North Maharashtra in the elections."

■ Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)'s in-charge of Maharashtra Ashok Siddharth: "Suresh Sakre contested assembly polls from Nagpur (North) against the wishes of the party and did not campaign for other candidates. He was defeated and the party too suffered"

■ Congress leader Sanjay Nirupam: "Accountability needs to be fixed in the party. Who finalised the candidates for the seats in Mumbai and what efforts were taken to get them elected?"

■ Maharashtra Chief Minister, Devendra Fadnavis: "The two seats we regret losing are Satara and Parli. We were confident that Pankaj Munde would win. Some of our Ministers have also lost and we will analyse this in due course. We think the rebellion has cost us and we will also look into that."

Kashmir. Many of my comrades are either in detention camps or under house arrest. Young boys are languishing in jails and their parents have no idea about their whereabouts. At least provisions of the Constitution of India, fundamental rights should have worked in J&K. Shouldn't I have the freedom to express my pain, know the reasons for my detention? The Constitution of India is non-existent in J&K today because of the whims of the leaders ruling the country today. They talk as if the people are willing to suffer. If that is true, then let people in Delhi experience life without internet for a week.

The government claims there is normalcy since there is no bloodshed. Yes, there is silence in the graveyards. Don't make my Kashmir, our Kashmir a graveyard.

How is the political situation?

Only one political party is functioning. Rest of the political parties have to fold their hands and sit. It is like martial law. We appeal to the people of this country, those parties committed to some sort of secular democratic ethos, please come out of your slumber before it is too late. There is disappointment with the democratic forces in the rest of the country. But the decision of August will have to be taken back. This is our resolve. When it will happen, how it will happen, the judge of our case are the people of this country. We are hopeful of getting justice from this highest of all courts.

Our disappointment is that Parliament should have at least had a proper debate on Articles 370 and 35A. If you had to sever ties with us at least you should have asked us our views. This relation is mutual. We were not informed, instead put in jails. There slogan is sabka saath, sabka vikas and sabka vishwas. Kashmir is the new laboratory of vishwas. Let them hold Assembly polls in Kashmir if they think they can form a government there.

How has the livelihood been affected in the last 80-days?

You can well imagine. We have three main sectors. Carpet weaving is our traditional craft and business. There is no work for the weavers. No raw material is available. Lakhs earn their livelihood through carpet weaving and trade. There is no internet so they cannot sell to buyers abroad. The story of pashmina shawls is the same. Our second sector is tourism. In the run up to August 5, Amarnath yatris were asked to leave (by the local administration). Tourists were dragged out of the hotels and forced to leave. It was said there was a terrorist threat. Then much of our apple crop rotted as it could not be transported out of Kashmir. Daily wagers have no work. Public transport is not plying. Shops are open but barely for a couple of hours each day. The view of streets deserted for most part of the day differ strikingly from those shown on television in the

rest of the country. Those TV visuals portray as if there is a traffic jam akin to Delhi's Chandni Chowk here.

There are now concerns in Jammu and Ladakh about outsiders taking up jobs and buying land.

The Ladakh MP (Jamyang Tsering Namgyal of the BJP) recently said in his speech in Leh about the region's unique culture, and the need to save it. Now he remembers culture when Articles 370 and 35A, which guaranteed protection of this uniqueness, have been removed. The Kashmiri Pandits, since they were educated and concerned at people from Punjab buying land and taking up jobs in J&K in those days, launched an agitation during the regime of Maharaja Hari Singh. A

law was implemented, which was the origin for Article 35A.

People of Jammu have for years been told that the Kashmiris eat up a lion's share of the resources. But have the people of Jammu got with this? The same questions, that of protection of their lands and jobs, confront them. Moreover, there can be differences between people of J&K, of Leh and Kargil, but we want to live together and sort out our problems together. We are

hopeful of the future. The problem is complex, but if the government believes that there is silence, and silence is a sign of acceptance, they would be hugely mistaken.

What about the question of Kashmiri Pandits and their return?

First of all a tragedy is a tragedy. The Kashmiri Pandits have experienced a big tragedy, there is no doubt about it. And they are part of the bigger tragedy of Kashmir itself. Kashmiri Pandits should return to their homeland and their homes. But this atmosphere that the Centre is creating is further widening the divide. The day when the return to Kashmir, that day will be Eid for us, Diwali, for us, the day when those separated for years will embrace each other. Some people have erred and we believe the Kashmiri Pandits have suffered hugely.

Do you fear Kashmir will escalate into more violence?

We cannot be sure about the future, but the youth is in deep distress. We are worried and appeal to the people of Kashmir, particularly the youth, that whatever provocation there is from authorities, whatever the wrongs of the government of India — the constitutional fraud, the betrayal — violence is not an option for the people of Kashmir. We appeal to them to not fall in the trap of those who want us isolated and defeated. Our real strength lies in our unity, in the solidarity of other democratic sections in the rest of the country. Our real strength lies in democratic peaceful protest and violence in every form must be and has to be unacceptable to all the shades of opinion.



A file photo of Run2Care - Delhi's shortest marathon organised by Those In Need to break the barriers and raise awareness about different forms of disabilities

participate in their events. Once volunteers participate in an event, they receive TINstones, which helps establish their credibility. In addition, the organisation has also started a social rewards point system which not only incentivises volunteers for social work, but also helps brands to connect with their target audience by promoting volunteer work. "As of now, we provide gift vouchers from PayTM, Flipkart, Amazon as incentives to the volunteers," says Saini pointing that a small incentive in social work goes long way in attracting the right talent and people to

the work. The team has also designed several awareness campaigns to bring in more volunteers. From animal rights to LGBTQ, the campaigns span 120 cities. The team is now also looking at spreading volunteering work across the world. One project underway is in South Africa. "We realised there are a lot of people who had the right set of skills to work however, had no opportunities there," says Saini. With their eyes on the world, the organisation is looking to make a social impact through quantifiable results.



THE OTHER INDIA

The quantum supremacy

The new result will accelerate investment in research

A large team of researchers drawn from Google, Nasa's Ames Research Centre, the University of California, The Oak Ridge National Laboratory in the US and the Forschungszentrum Research Centre in Germany claims to have achieved "quantum supremacy." According to the paper published in *Nature*, the team conceptualised and completed a computational task, which the most powerful conventional supercomputer (the IBM-designed Summit at Oak Ridge) would take about 10,000 years to solve. This took 200 seconds on Google's Sycamore quantum chip. The results, generated by Sycamore, were being tested simultaneously by Summit, which

was tackling the same problems until the complexity became too much for Summit.

This claim is being disputed by IBM, which says that the programmers did not program Summit efficiently. IBM has released a paper estimating that Summit could solve this within about 60 hours. However, as even IBM's rebuttal concedes, there is a vast difference between 200 seconds and 60 hours.

The problem itself was esoteric, consisting of the generation of random numbers, and testing to see if these are random. The team used the architecture of the 54-Qubit Sycamore to generate those random sequences, translated into random binary numbers. The solution has no apparent

practical application beyond being complex enough to benchmark versus the fastest conventional super-computer.

This is the first demonstration that quantum machines can indeed perform tasks beyond the capacity of conventional machines. It is understandable that it has led to hyperbolic comparisons with the first powered flight. After all, the Wright brothers' Flyer stayed aloft only for 12 seconds on December 17, 1903, at Kittyhawk, North Carolina. The premise backing research in quantum computers is simple. A conventional bit is binary. It can be set to one, or zero, depending on whether there is a current flowing through or not. A quantum bit uses the phenomenon of superposition to be in both states, zero and one, at the same time. When you create a quantum machine with many qubits, it has the ability, in theory, to process exponentially greater information. Moreover, using entanglement, a property so strange that Einstein called it

"spooky", a qubit influences the state of another qubit at a distance. That has other applications, including communication and cryptography.

The engineering and mathematical challenges in handling Q-chips are formidable. Q-chips have to be cooled to near absolute zero and kept in that state to function. They generate huge errors, which have to be catered for, and eliminated, to generate meaningful results, when the superpositions are collapsed. This means entirely new algorithms and error-correction codes must be written to handle quantum computing. The research team admits that this is a narrow result and Google is nowhere near solving these major problems yet.

But these are known unknowns. This result indicates that there are no unknown barriers to prevent quantum computing from scaling beyond conventional machines. That gives cause for optimism that quantum computers will be capable

of tackling real-world problems, which conventional machines cannot.

Some obvious applications would include biological problems of genetic mapping, drug development, and protein folding. Google also cites the possibility that Q-machines could be used to design better batteries, or more efficient processes for manufacturing fertiliser (which contributes about 2 per cent of global carbon emission). The utility would also include cryptography. Quantum machines could conceivably break all current high-end encryption very quickly. They could also generate unbreakable codes that make it impossible to intercept, or tamper with messages, or to read a message without the key. This result is bound to lead to an acceleration of investment into research. Google has shared its data set and promised to offer time to independent programmers who can think up creative applications. It might take years but this could be the dawn of a new era.

Decoding randomised controlled trials

Poverty is a complex, multi-dimensional issue. Is it amenable to solutions that deploy RCT?

ATANU BISWAS

In his 2017 book, *Experimental Conversations: Perspectives on Randomised Trials in Development Economics*, Timothy Ogden, an expert on financial inclusion, was looking for credible assessments on "randomised controlled trials" (RCT) to know "how we learn about the world, what evidence is and means, and how policy should and shouldn't be formed" from the distinguished researchers who interact with RCT in every imaginable way.

Examples of RCT in real-life clinical trials can be traced back to the 16th century. Documented evidence of RCT in psychology and education in the late 19th century is available, and rigorous statistical formulation of RCT was done in the 1920s and 1930s. Later, in the second half of the 20th century, RCT became an essential tool — "rational therapeutics" — for clinical trials.

RCT has become an integral part of clinical trials due to the nature of the scientific question associated with the experiments. Suppose a new treatment/intervention is under experimentation for treating some unknown fever, and 80 of the 100 patients recover as a result of that treatment: can we safely conclude that the recovery rate of the treatment is 80 per cent? It is possible that a considerable proportion of patients recover even without any treatment.

Thus, to look at the true effect of the treatment, one needs an estimate of the recovery rate without "treatment", and this may become available through enrolling some more patients into the study and not giving them any treatment. Suppose 60 out of 100 such "controlled" patients recover, yielding an estimated recovery rate of 60 per cent. The estimated "treatment difference" is thus 20 per cent, which is an indicator of the advantage of using "treatment" over "control".

Now, the first 100 patients could be given the treatment, and the remaining 100 control, or vice versa. Any such prior knowledge of treatment assignment might induce "selection bias". To circumvent that, one needs to employ "randomisation" — a random mechanism like tossing a coin or drawing a random number from a computer — to allocate patients in the treatment under experimentation and the control group. The procedure will then become a RCT.

It has been almost an ideological war concerning RCT in development economics for the last two decades or so. One group, called "randomistas", considers RCT the holy grail of development economics, while the other, led by 2015 economics Nobel Prize



The "randomista" trio who won the Nobel economics prize: Esther Duflo, Abhijit Banerjee and Michael Kremer

winner Angus Deaton, has expressed reservations about RCT in terms of both philosophy and effectiveness. The future of development economics depends on who's going to win this war.

Interestingly, about three years back, Esther Duflo had commented while battling in favour of RCT: "I think it's been completely won in that I think it's just happening...I think it is now understood to be one of the tools." With this year's Nobel Prize for economists having been won by three proponents of RCT — Michael Kremer, who is generally given credit for launching the RCT movement in development economics, and Abhijit Banerjee and Duflo — has the war over RCT been now won by the randomistas?

What if randomisation is not done in economic experiments? Certainly, selection bias would prevail. But, will that be very serious, especially if there is apprehension of imperfect randomisation in many experiments? Moreover, randomisation facilitates "blinding", or masking of the identity of treatments from investigators, participants, and assessors in clinical trials, and thus reduces bias. It is impossible to ensure blinding in economic experiments, and proponents of RCT know that well.

Also, advanced randomisation techniques like "adaptive randomi-

sation" use accumulated data within the experiment to fix several features, such as the allocation pattern, test statistics and monitoring time. These are also very difficult to employ in social experiments due to their very nature. However, randomisation helps in using probability theory and statistical techniques for making inferences and finding standard errors and their estimates.

Interestingly, statisticians are usually an integral part of the clinical trials team, and its framework, design, randomisation, implementation, and data analyses are generally statistically rigorous, correct and of the desirable quality. The food and drug administration of the country concerned acts as a watchdog in such clinical trials. These are billion-dollar experiments, having a trillion-dollar market, for the benefit of billions of people worldwide.

Hundreds of thousands of clinical trials have been documented so far (by contrast, the number of RCT in development economics is less than a few thousand), mostly owing to the business interests of the pharmaceutical giants. Yet nobody ever thought that a Nobel Prize in medicine could be awarded for conducting such statistically accurate and precise life-saving experiments through RCT, having tremendous business potential. It

is a century-old technique in statistics. By contrast, it is a daunting task to conduct RCT in different aspects of poverty all over the world.

The scientific question behind clinical trials is often unidimensional — the effectiveness of a new drug for a disease. By contrast, philosophical-ly, economists like Deaton and many others believe that poverty is a very big and complex issue, with many inter-related components and dimensions. Every single event might have numerous different kinds of important (often long-term) economic and social impetus.

Now, in order to facilitate the use of RCT, poverty has been sliced and diced into numerous small parts by the randomistas. Thus, a complicated multivariate problem has been transformed into many univariate ones by ignoring the complexity defined by the inherent associations of these small parts. Are these univariate bits of "evidence" enough to solve the jigsaw puzzle of poverty? However, the randomistas never claim that they are out to solve the poverty problem completely; rather, they are interested to find evidence to eradicate some of those smaller parts.

The debate on RCT, and whether the future of economics is in good hands or in danger, will continue, with the randomistas in a more comfortable place since the announcement of this year's Nobel for economics.

The writer is professor, Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata

E-cigarettes cause more harm, not less

VINOD K PAUL & BALRAM BHARGAVA

The Union government recently banned ENDS (Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems), or e-cigarettes, as they are popularly known. E-cigarettes pose a serious health risk to users, who more often than not are adolescents and young adults. ENDS lead to devastating nicotine addiction and may serve as a gateway to conventional tobacco use throughout life. By banning e-cigarettes, India has saved generations of Indians from substance dependence and tobacco-related health hazards.

An e-cigarette is a battery-operated device that heats a nicotine-containing flavoured solution to create vapours that are inhaled (or "vaped"). Further, ENDS devices are also used to vape cannabis and other addictive substances. Young people find vaping stylish and "cool", ignoring its potential to trap them in a habit that they would find difficult to let go. Unsurprisingly, the use of e-cigarettes has spread rapidly. There were several alarming media reports of e-cigarette use among school students. Therefore, government action was timely. The health ministry decided to ban ENDS by ordinance, based on the recommendations of various expert committees, the Drugs Technical Advisory Board and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

On the eve of "World No Tobacco Day" (May 31), this year, ICMR published a comprehensive white paper on ENDS, recommending a complete prohibition, in the larger interest of protecting public health. The white paper reported that use of ENDS is harmful to the cardiovascular system, respiratory system and many other body systems and poses a risk to fetal, infant, and child brain development. Studies have shown that vaping, like cigarette-smoking, impairs respiratory immune cell function and airways, resulting in severe respiratory diseases and increased susceptibility to infections. The possibility of cancer cannot be ruled out as well.

Vaping is also harmful to non-users and passive vapors. Passive exposure to vapours during pregnancy can severely affect the health of both the mother and fetus. There is also a potential risk of environmental hazards from the disposal of e-cigarette waste or ENDS devices, as well as their manufacture.

E-cigarette use by non-smokers can lead to nicotine addiction and thereby to regular smoking. A typical cartridge contains about as much nicotine as a pack of 20 regular cigarettes. Furthermore, the amount of nicotine and other chemicals in these products varies widely, and thus the consumer remains unaware of the actual contents of these products. Nicotine solvents release potential carcinogens like acetaldehyde, formaldehyde and acetone, depending on battery output voltage.

Liquid-vaporising solutions contain propylene glycol, vegetable glycerol, other toxic chemicals and metals that have been demonstrated to be responsible for several

serious health effects, including cancers and diseases of the heart, lungs and brain. Moreover, the flavouring agents used in e-cigarettes can also adversely affect the consumer's health due to cytotoxic effects. A study on menthol and peppermint vapors revealed high concentrations of the carcinogenic additive "pulegone", which was recently banned by the US.

In many countries where ENDS were introduced, there has been an alarming increase in e-cigarette use among youth and adolescents, who are more susceptible to developing nicotine dependence than adults. E-cigarettes are the most commonly used nicotine products in the US, and their use is reported to be rising at an alarming rate. A US study in 2015 reported that 40 per cent of 18-24-year-olds who were e-cigarette users had never smoked conventional cigarettes. In 2018, another study suggested that about 21 per cent of high school students and 5 per cent of middle school students reported using e-cigarettes in the preceding 30 days. Public opinion is intensifying against ENDS in the US. San Francisco became the first city to ban e-cigarettes in January 2019, and a day before India's ban, New York outlawed flavoured e-cigarettes.

The tobacco industry's efforts at harm reduction globally are not a new tactic to find a convoluted way to promote their products. With similar claims, filtered cigarettes evolved decades ago, but the harm caused by tobacco did not decline, nor did the incidence of lung cancers related to tobacco use, across the world. On the contrary, filtered cigarettes with added flavours were increasingly perceived as safe, helping the industry grow. Filtered cigarettes still dominate the market, with their market share climbing from 0.5 per cent in 1950 to over 98 per cent today.

Since the emergence of e-cigarettes in the mid-2000s, the industry has promoted them as a safer alternative to conventional cigarettes and an effective way to stop smoking. The industry's claims are being endorsed by advocates of their products around the world, backed by homegrown and industry-funded research. However, such claims have been refuted by a majority of independent researchers around the world. Ultimately, e-cigarettes are about harm proliferation, not harm reduction.

Strengthening the implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control is an SDG-3 imperative worldwide. India's swift end to ENDS is a step in that direction and could be the beginning of the rollback of e-cigarettes worldwide. Given the high-profile pitch by the prime minister at the recent UN General Assembly event, the appreciation by WHO and others, it is very likely that India's decisive action will be emulated by many countries in the near future.

Paul is member, NITI Aayog; Bhargava is secretary, Department of Health Research, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, and director general, ICMR

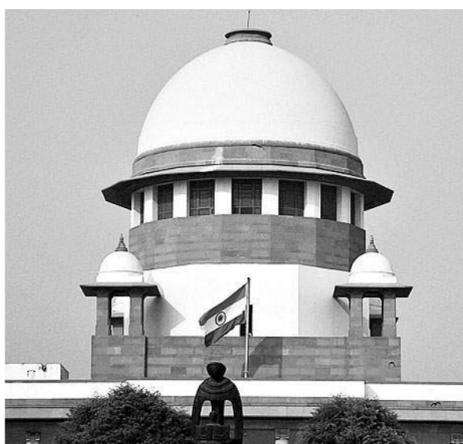
▶ OTHER VIEWS

India's overburdened legal system is unable to cope

Large number of pending cases raises questions of accountability to citizens

If delayed justice spells doom, then the most pressing question ought to be why is there a delay in the first place? Some answers seem to have been provided by a recent study commissioned by the Union law ministry and conducted by the Indian Institute of Management Calcutta. The findings are grim: on an average, it takes over two-and-a-half years for a litigant to get a judgment. Worse, only 41 per cent of this time involves the actual functioning of the court. The reasons unearthed for these dismal figures include, especially at the level of trial courts, the shortage and non-attendance of judges, arbitrary adjournments, the absence of lawyers and witnesses and prolonged legal arguments. None of these concerns is new. As the findings of the study indicate, none of the problems feeding this perception has been addressed.

The convoluted nature of the litigation process is another cause cited by the study for judicial delays. This inconvenience those seeking redress, given that significant sections of the litigants belong to marginalised communities with little access to education or the means to afford proper legal representation. The paucity of judges, it is believed, is a major factor in the pendency of cases. The increase in the number of



judges must be accompanied by improved administrative infrastructure dedicated to curbing case-related delays. This can only be achieved with the help of judicial reform, which a democracy must undertake anyway as part of its overall development.

The Telegraph, October 25

Improved report card

States must now do their bit on EoDB

For an economy starved of good news, the news of a rise in India's ranking by 14 places to 63 in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business 2020 survey is a positive development. India also figures in the top ten most improved countries in the world for the third consecutive year. From being ranked 142 in 2014 to 63 in 2020, it has been a significant upward journey for the country in a rank list that is an important input in the plans of global investors. The latest improvement has come on the back of the implementation of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC). The reforms in trade procedures and paperwork as a result of India signing the Trade Facilitation Agreement at the World Trade Organisation are beginning to

show. Interestingly, there has been improvement in a parameter that most industrialists would consider as a problem even now: "Dealing with construction permits". The country lags in key metrics such as "Starting a business", "Enforcing contracts" and "Registering property". It should also be borne in mind that the rankings are based on samples and audits done in Mumbai and Delhi only (the World Bank has said it would be covering Bengaluru and Kolkata too from next year). The easier part is now done and rise in rankings from hereon will depend on how much the Centre is able to convince the states to reform their systems.

The Hindu, October 25

Opportunity for Congress

But it will need to mobilise the people

The Maharashtra and Haryana assembly election results offer the Opposition, especially the Congress, some reason to cheer. After the drubbing in the general election a few months ago, it has crawled back to relevance in both states. By all accounts, the Congress has been the indirect beneficiary of anti-incumbency in these states. In Haryana, the party has made considerable gains from 2014, but it may have more to do with it being the default option for voters angry with the Manohar Lal Khattar government. If it has been thinning organisationally, it has been missing in action politically, staying away from street mobilisations in the past five years despite the growing stress in

the agriculture sector and disquiet among youth over joblessness.

In Maharashtra, the NCP has won more seats than its parent body and is poised to be the main Opposition party. Maharashtra was rocked by protests over farm distress, unemployment, social discrimination and so on in the past five years. Yet here too, the Congress was missing in action even as a large section of the population turned restive. The party will need to sort out leadership issues, revitalise its cadre, and voice public concerns by mobilising on the streets if it wishes to be in the reckoning more than it is at the moment.

The Indian Express, October 25

Opinion

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2019

‘Pix clutter your phone? You may be an artist’

Data reveal average number of photos stored on any smartphone is 952

LEONID BERSHIDSKY

AS SMARTPHONE CAMERAS continue to improve, we are understandably taking more and more photos with them. Priceonomics, a San Francisco-based firm that analyses data to create content, attempted to figure just how many more.

Using data from Avast, a company that makes antivirus and maintenance software, it found that the average number of photos stored on a smartphone anywhere in the world is 952. Five years ago, a study based on data from another app developer, Magisto, put the average number at 630. Though the large datasets used in both cases are not directly comparable, it's likely that they accurately capture how much more we're photographing with our phones. They also reveal the same trends—for example, more photos taken in certain Asian countries than elsewhere, and more pictures snapped by women than men.

Is this increase in snapping and storing good for us, though? That depends on how we use that camera.

In 2013, Linda Henkel, a psychologist from Fairfield University in Connecticut, described a “photo-taking-impairment effect.” People told to walk around a museum photographing some objects and merely looking at others turned out to have clearer memories of the exhibits they hadn't snapped. Other studies with different experimental setups have confirmed the existence of this effect.

An early theory explaining the impairment effect held that people forget things they photograph because they, consciously or unconsciously, want to get rid of unnecessary information they'd otherwise keep in their heads. “Cognitive offloading,” researchers named it. Two years ago, Julia Soares and Benjamin Storm from the University of California at Santa Cruz, found that the impairment effect is present even when people use an ephemeral messaging app such as Snapchat to take a photo, or when they're told to delete the image manually. This suggested that memories aren't simply offloaded, they're merely dimmed when we put a camera between ourselves and an experience.

It gets even more complicated. The work of Alixandra Barasch from New York University, Kristin Diehl at the University of Southern California and Jackie Silverman at the University of Pennsylvania has shown that taking pictures tends to aid recall when people consciously look for specific details or aspects to photograph. They called this “volitional photo taking.” This doesn't



Stepping away from a scene to take a picture, and thus losing touch with it, creates a false familiarity with the subject and makes us less likely to make an effort to remember it

actually contradict Henkel's work: She, too, found that people in her museum experiment tended to remember better when they zoomed in on specific details.

Thus, the question of whether the phone is a memory aid or a trash can for unwanted memories hinges on our level of engagement. We can behave somewhat like professional photographers, looking for the best angle, an interesting detail, an object among many that we want to bring back from an exhibition. Or we can just click that button indiscriminately. Soares of California-Santa Cruz, who found that Snapchat photos are forgotten as fast as the ones that remain stored, referred to the latter practice as “attentional disengagement.” Stepping away from a scene to take a picture, and thus losing touch with it, creates a false familiarity with the subject and makes us less likely to make an effort to remember it.

In another series of experiments, Barasch and Diehl, along with Gal Zauber- man from Yale University, discovered that

taking pictures tends to make any activity — from a bus tour to an ordinary lunch — more fun when it increases engagement with the experience rather than interferes with it or adds a new element to what's already highly engaging. And, in a separate paper, they showed that the intention to share photos can detract from the enjoyment because it “increases self-presentational concern during the experience.”

Notably, all this science is consistent with the finding by a group of UK researchers that selfie-taking is positively correlated with smartphone dependency and anxiety. In addition, people who are less phone-dependent tend to take more photographs of nature. Those people also tend to be older. And, interestingly, somewhat older users, according to the Avast data, tend to store more photos on their phones than the youngest people. The average number of pictures on the phone of a person aged 18 through 24 is 836; a person between

25 and 34 keeps 1,067 of them.

Priceonomics offers a plausible explanation: The youngest people are more likely to use ephemeral messaging apps that don't save photos by default. That means they take more photos with the purpose of sharing them. It also likely means more selfies, which are used as a means of visual conversation, and other low-engagement pictures. Snap, send, forget.

The higher accumulation of photos cluttering the memory of the phones of relatively older age groups isn't necessarily a problem. Often, these pictures are taken in contemplation, as a way to study something closer, take in and remember more details. Then, the snapping habit isn't just benign — it's a private form of art, not necessarily shared with anyone. And even if we never return to our photo galleries, the intimacy of the contact we once established with our subjects can stay with us.

— BLOMBERG



INSIDE TRACK
COOMI KAPOOR

Some up, some down

Is national security advisor Ajit Doval up or down in the Modi-2 regime? On one hand, with Amit Shah as home minister, Doval's wings automatically get clipped in internal security matters. When Rajnath Singh was home minister, Doval held forth freely at North Block meetings. But with Shah as boss there is less scope for interventions. At times, when Doval issues instructions to the IB chief or other agency heads, he is informed that they have to first check with Shah. On the other hand, there is physical evidence that Doval's clout is expanding in other areas. For instance, earlier he occupied just one floor of Sardar Patel Bhawan as his personal office. Now Doval, raised to the rank of Cabinet minister, has taken over most of the building for the National Security Council (NSC) Secretariat, which has expanded noticeably. There are even three deputy NSAs and the building entrance has got a facelift. Most importantly, the rules of business were re-framed this month so that the NSC can generate Cabinet notes and act like a full government department.

Om, thank goodness

Defence minister Rajnath Singh sent word to the Indian ambassador in France that he wanted a pandit to be present when he landed in Bordeaux for the formal ceremony of officially handing over the first of the 36 Rafale jets manufactured for the Indian Air Force. The French authorities, alerted that a puja would be performed on the runway, made discrete inquiries as to what the procedure entailed. At the Dassault Aviation Centre, Rajnath, carried out the rituals of a shastra puja, the ceremony for worshipping weapons. He offered a coconut and flowers, while a lemon was placed under the aircraft wheel. Singh put kum kum on his finger to inscribe the auspicious figure 'Om' on the jet. The French witnessing the ceremony, including the minister for armed forces, top army brass and senior officials of Dassault, heaved a sigh of relief. They had been informed that traditionally Indians inscribe a swastika during a puja. The swastika is an unhappy symbol for France since it evokes memories of Nazi occupation of the country during World War II.

Advice not wanted

Veteran journalist Ashok Malik's field of expertise is the media. His last job in fact was as press secretary to the President. But in his new position as “policy advisor” in the ministry of

external affairs he has reportedly been told not to offer advice on the media. The External Publicity Division is possessive about its turf, even if its efforts for positive coverage on Kashmir in the foreign press have fallen rather short.

Preventive strike

The recent BCCI elections demonstrated that this is yet another sphere in which Amit Shah holds sway. However, it was not Shah alone who rooted for Sourav Ganguly over Brijesh Patel for the president's post. Along with MoS finance Anurag Thakur, Assam minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who controls the seven votes from the Northeast states, and Congressman Rajiv Shukla who is influential with the Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Hyderabad cricket boards, also backed Ganguly. While the common surmise is that Shah coveted a winning face for his party in the Bengal Assembly polls, the BJP president realises that Bengal's cautious dada has a history of keeping on the right side of all political parties, whether the TMC, CPI(M) or Congress, and is unlikely to throw his lot solely with the BJP. The common target of the new BCCI members from different camps is Vinod Rai, till last week head of the BCCI's Committee of Administrators (CoA). The cricket bosses who lost control of the most lucrative sport in the country for over three years had announced to all and sundry that they would settle scores by investigating some of the financial transactions of the CoA. Forewarned, the Supreme Court, while permitting the elected office-bearers to take charge, scuttled attempts for a potential witch-hunt against predecessors by inserting two safeguard clauses. No proceedings against the CoA members is possible without court clearance and legal expenses will be borne by the BCCI.

Waiting for cook

The Garvi Gujarat building, the new Gujarat Bhavan in Delhi inaugurated by PM Modi on September 2, has won plaudits and publicity. But the Bhavan, located on the prestigious Akbar Road, still awaits a resident cook. It is not easy to persuade a skilled Gujarati cook to move to Delhi, since cooks find the cost of living much cheaper in their home state and they prefer the familiar surroundings. The Gujarat authorities put out tenders for an agency to run the kitchen. The tender has finally been awarded, now everyone is waiting for the cook.

Into crisis mode

The young South African team is going through a difficult transition, but their decline is alarming

RINGSIDE VIEW

Shamik Chakrabarty



FAF DU PLESSIS was hurting. The South Africa captain is a fantastic player in his own right. He played in winning teams, alongside the likes of Jacques Kallis, AB de Villiers, Dale Steyn and Hashim Amla. But at Ranchi, after his team was hammered 3-0 by a ruthless Indian side, du Plessis looked to be searching for answers.

At Ranchi, in the third Test, lots of overs had been lost because of rain. Still, South Africa conceded an innings defeat very early into the fourth morning. In the second Test at Pune also, they had suffered an innings defeat. Only in the first Test at Vizag, did the visitors show some fight and managed to take the game to the final day. A young South African side looked mentally and technically inept to counter India's quality and aggression. The Proteas have now lost three of their last four Test series. Du Plessis admitted that they were out-

classed. He spoke about the Indian fast bowlers' pace and consistency, and the ruthlessness of India's batting, which according to the skipper made them mentally weak.

“It takes a lot of energy and it takes a lot of toll and that's why you could see towards the end our batting line-up was mentally weak. You don't want to be mentally weak. Obviously you try as hard as you can. But the ruthlessness of them (India) right through this series... you just feel like there's no opportunity or moment in the game when you can hide, you know. It's like constantly your body is tired, your mind is tired and then you make mistakes,” du Plessis had said.

South Africa's decline is alarming. Of course this is a young team, which is going through transition. They have lost their big guns — de Villiers, Steyn, Amla, Imran Tahir and Morne Morkel. You can't buy their class and experience in the market. Young players need time to grow. The Saffers have an exciting batting talent in Zubayr Hamza and a world-class fast bowler in Kagiso Rabada. Their team management erred in not picking Hamza for the first two Tests — he had an excellent ‘A’ tour for South Africa in India last year and also



South Africa's captain Faf du Plessis, looking back after being dismissed by India's Mohammed Shami during the third day of India versus South Africa test match in Ranchi

impressed during his half-century in the first innings at Ranchi.

Handling transition is not easy. Mind, after the 2011 World Cup, when India had been going through that phase, suffering whitewashes became the norm — in England and Australia. India had even lost a home series to England during that period. India, however, had a vast talent pool to choose from for a quick rebuild. South Africa don't have that advantage.

Four years ago, Cricket South Africa (CSA) submitted a document to the national government, outlining its roadmap to implement transformation policies that would create opportunities for “previously disadvantaged” people. Under the policy, a quota system was introduced at all levels of cricket. At first-class level, picking six non-white players — at least two black Africans — became mandatory. For the national team, the quota number became the same, although it was decided that instead of every match, an average would be taken every year.

In the grand scheme of things, it was the right decision. To make cricket popular in South Africa, the sport had to get rid of its white exclusivity. But the policy also threw up a ‘merit versus opportunity’ debate. Those who were left out, decided to move on. Many of them took the Kolpak route and switched to playing county cricket in England at the expense of international cricket.

South African players are eligible for the Kolpak deals via the Cotonou Agreement with the European Union (EU), and since 2004, the Proteas have lost dozens of cricketers to Kolpak, including stars like Morne Morkel and Kyle Abbott, and also exciting young talents like Simon Harmer. Du Plessis described how Kolpak has hurt South African cricket. “...we are also losing our experience in domestic cricket. Your top players domestically are going overseas. Your guys that get left out of the South African team, they go overseas. So you are missing out on all your best players and your talent pool is all of a sudden a lot smaller. And even like I said, the guys going there post international cricket, guys like Hashim Amla, those guys, they won't be playing domestic cricket back home. So you lose all of that experience.”

Money, too, is a big reason for the Kolpak exodus, as the South Africa skipper pointed out, “Pound is stronger than Rand”. Du Plessis hoped that a no-deal Brexit would close the Kolpak route, because in that case UK will no longer be a part of the EU.

All valid reasons aside, the CSA needs to revamp its domestic structure. The country's domestic cricket has become weak. Also, schools, the breeding ground of the future stars in South African cricket, somehow are not unearthing quality young talent at a steady pace. It's time for a reboot.

my life & WORK

SHAMIKA RAVI



More women is good economics — economists

THE PERSON who convinced me to do a PhD in economics was Abhijit Banerjee of MIT, when I worked with him on one of the first randomised controlled trials in the field of economics in the late 1990s. During my PhD, I had the good fortune to work closely with several exceptional scholars. Jonathan Morduch, William Easterly, Andrew Schotter and the legendary William Baumol — each have made a lasting impression on my worldview and philosophy of life. I did not, however, see enough women faculty around. I was surrounded by extremely smart and driven people, but mostly men. You think that you are gender-blind, but in reality, one begins to internalise the highly unequal world of the economics profession. Reality kicks hardest when, as a young economics faculty, you choose to also become a mother. There is so little support forthcoming that you have to put up a fight almost every step of the way. I think this is why most women economists at the top are battle hardened (given the survivor bias!). I firmly believe that we need many more women in the field of economics — but this will only begin to happen when we equalise all the costs (explicit and implicit) for men and women in the profession.

It is crucial for young girls to have female mentors because research shows that it encourages them to persevere ahead, despite difficulties. I have been teaching at the Indian School of Business for the last 15 years, and sometimes in lighter moments the male students have remarked that I am too tough on them, but “nicer” to the female students during class participation which is an integral part of the MBA training. It is an early

training for future leadership role, and therefore, I like to encourage the women to speak up.

It is important, first of all, to remember that there are no silver bullets in economic development. But a massive amount of evidence from the experimentation of three decades in micro-finance has shown that women can be agents of change in the economy and larger society. It makes good economic and social sense to target women for development of micro-entrepreneurship. Economic empowerment of women through small financial instruments (loans, savings, insurance) can have long-term impact on their well-being and the well-being of their children in particular. My own research shows that women borrowers are more empowered in their health-seeking behaviour than other women in similar conditions. There is also research which shows the strong demonstration effect that working women have on school retention rate of girl students. So there is empirical evidence that helps in designing policy intervention to combat patriarchy, while we continue to research newer pathways.

I do not see women as equal participants in India's growth today. This is why I think that human capital of women is one of our most under-exploited potentials. We are locked in a bad equilibrium which is also unfortunately, a very stable equilibrium. To get out of this, we will need policy shocks. These can take the form of legislation (tax incentives, women's reservations, maternity benefits, required board directorships etc.) and concerted government policy efforts aimed at reducing the cost of economic participation by women (safer workplaces, public trans-



Esther Duflo and Abhijit Banerjee won the Nobel Prize in Economics. AP

port, well-lit streets, targeted policing, scholarships, hospital protocols targeting women patients, awareness programmes etc.). But the larger problem cannot be addressed by governments alone. For instance, one of my research papers shows that despite similarity in costs across genders, nearly 49 per cent of women patients are missing from our apex public hospitals. This shows the gross neglect and discrimination in health-seeking within our society. The malaise runs deep and will require small social revolutions in many spheres. This is where I derive comfort in the fact that several states (Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Goa, Sikkim) and sectors (banking, aviation etc.) within our own country lead the way towards gender parity, and provide a blueprint for others to follow. We don't necessarily need to look towards the Scandinavians for inspiration.

One of my simplest studies, yet most powerful in implication, documents the significant rise of women voters in India. A

study shows that increase in female voter participation was not an outcome of any concerted policy of the government or the Election Commission of India, but a “silent revolution” of self-empowerment. This trend has only become stronger in the last two decades with better connectivity and out-of-state election policing etc. Yet, at a more fundamental level, we know that a significant number of women “electors” are missing — this is partly because they are not registered on the electoral rolls but partly because these women do not exist in our society. They are missing from our society because many die at birth, many die in infancy, many die in adolescence, very many die in childbirth (maternal mortality), many die due to lack of access to quality healthcare in older age groups etc. So the electoral outcomes only reflect the preferences (will) of those who survive. Therefore to make our democracy more representative, we have to ensure that more and more women survive in our society.

I am excited by this year's Nobel award in Economics despite my doubts regarding the RCT approach to poverty reduction. Beyond methodological concerns (external validity etc.), RCTs are great to measure impacts of specific interventions. If the objective, however, are policies for poverty reduction, then evidence from India and China strongly reaffirm the power of structural reforms and economic growth. In many cases, the small tweaks that RCTs carefully measure (e.g. extra teachers, meals, cameras etc., in schools to raise overall performance) keep us from considering more fundamental structural reforms (like privatisation of schools, for instance) which are important policy counterfactuals. Yet, the prize to Esther Duflo especially is being celebrated because, as a recent CGD (Center For Global Development) blog noted, “...feels like a win for women and for dual career couples struggling to balance work and family in a profession that has historically been dominated by older men whose wives were at home warming their slippers and typing up their lecture notes.”

Eventually, we must aspire towards equality in opportunity which is much more important than equality in outcomes. Every society must struggle to create equal opportunities for its women citizens. Only then can we compare the outcomes and know whether men and women have distinct preferences and interests or are there innate differences in their abilities. This holds true for economics as well as for prestige careers of economists.

Ravi is Director of Research at Brookings India and teaches economics at the Indian School of Business

Fifth COLUMN

TAVLEEN SINGH

Twitter @tavleen_singh



A deluded campaign

THERE IS no genteel way to say this so I am going to spit it out: menacing hyper-nationalism does not win elections. It was menacing hyper-nationalism that defined the BJP's election campaigns in Maharashtra and Haryana and voters rejected it. The BJP may well form governments again in both these states but the truth is that in this seeming victory lies hidden a warning that Narendra Modi would do well to heed. The warning is that even a prime minister who has just won a second term must never start thinking of himself as invincible. Delusions of invincibility have been sadly much too evident ever since that second term began and they became manifest in a very ugly way during the recent election campaign.

As someone who has supported Modi openly in this column, I was horrified to hear him virtually charge his political opponents with treason for opposing the removal of Article 370. Ask them, he said often, if they would dare bring it back. Sharad Pawar answered correctly that it made no difference to the people of Maharashtra whether this Article was there or not since destitute farmers from his state were not exactly ready to race off to buy land in the Kashmir Valley. The menace in the Prime Minister's speeches was amplified by his faithful fellow traveller Amit Shah who gives that word a whole new dimension.

When I asked ordinary people in Maharashtra what they thought of the removal of Article 370, the general response was puzzlement that I should even be asking them this question. Most people seemed unsure what difference it made to their lives and usually, after pausing to think about it, they would remind me that jobs were being lost in the auto industry and banks were failing and it was these things that worried them most. I did not get a chance to travel in Haryana this time but am willing to bet that voters in that state were as unconcerned about Article 370 as voters in Maharashtra. And yet, this was all that the BJP's campaign had to offer. This was mixed with some very nasty hyper-nationalistic rhetoric that singled out Muslims as the only ‘infiltrators’ who were not welcome in India. Unsurprisingly, this got noticed all the way in Washington when a congressional committee met to discuss human rights in South Asia.

Speaking of which, has anyone in the Prime Minister's Office noticed that it was only human rights violations in Kashmir that appeared to come up for discussion? Nothing about Balochistan, nothing about the human rights of Shias and Ahmediyas in the Islamic Republic. Our diplomats seem to be doing a really bad job of explaining to the world why the Kashmir Valley continues to be incommunicado and in a state of semi-curfew so many weeks after Article 370 was removed. On the domestic front, the situation is if anything even more worrying because if there is a strategy to win the peace in Kashmir it is being kept very secret. The Prime Minister tweeted proudly last week about how ‘the people of J&K have been able to exercise their democratic rights with exceptional enthusiasm, as seen in the historic turnout of 98% that too without violence or disturbance.’

These were village-level elections but it is no small achievement that they should have been held. What will matter much more to the world is whether there will be ‘exceptional enthusiasm’ when elections are held to the legislative Assembly. The removal of Article 370 has internationalised our Kashmir problem dramatically, so the world will be watching whenever these elections are held. It is hard to say when or how but what can be said is that if the BJP campaign is imbued with menacing hyper-nationalism, the chances of winning the peace in Kashmir will become much harder. And yet, the peace has to be won, and it has to be won soon, so instead of weaponizing the abolition of Article 370 it might be a good idea to start explaining to ordinary Kashmiris exactly how it is that they will benefit from losing their special status and losing even their status as a state in the Union of India.

In Maharashtra and Haryana there would have been much more support for the BJP if there had been more talk in the campaign of steps being taken to reverse the economic slowdown. It is beginning to hurt ordinary people now because when jobs are lost instead of being created, everyone can see that there is cause for concern. On this day that we celebrate the goddess of prosperity, it is appropriate to remind the Prime Minister that unless signs of prosperity begin to become evident soon, he could start discovering how quickly delusions of invincibility begin to fade. Meanwhile, a very Happy Diwali to all of you.

inside TRACK

COOMI KAPOOR



SOME UP, SOME DOWN

IS NATIONAL Security Advisor Ajit Doval up or down in the Modi-2 regime? On one hand, with Amit Shah as Home Minister, Doval's wings automatically get clipped in internal security matters. When Rajnath Singh was home minister, Doval held forth freely at North Block meetings. But with Shah as boss there is less scope for interventions. At times, when Doval issues instructions to the IB chief or other agency heads, he is informed that they have to first check with Shah. On the other hand, there is physical evidence that Doval's clout is expanding in other areas. For instance, earlier he occupied just one floor of Sardar Patel Bhawan as his personal office. Now Doval, raised to the rank of Cabinet minister, has taken over most of the building for the National Security Council (NSC) Secretariat, which has expanded noticeably. There are even three deputy NSAs and the building entrance has got a facelift. Most importantly, the rules of business were re-framed this month so that the NSC can generate Cabinet notes and act like a full government department.

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PREVENTIVE STRIKE

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history HEADLINE

RAKSHANDA JALIL



In Iqbal's words

MY EARLIEST memories of school are of singing ‘*Lab pe aati hai dua ban ke tamanna meri...*’ with a bunch of other kids, all equally earnest, all with hands folded and eyes closed. These are reinforced with memories of my grandfather Professor Ale Ahmad Suroor, a poet and Urdu scholar responsible in large part for rehabilitating Iqbal's poetry. Too young to fully comprehend its philosophical import, too naive to question its often faulty political and ideological underpinnings, it was the sheer musicality of the words that held me in thrall.

When Abba recited ‘*O Ghafil Afghani, ‘Jang-e Yarmooq ka aik Waqeya, ‘Naya Shivala, ‘Haqiqat-e Husni, ‘Gibril-o Iblis*’ or ‘*Rohila*’ in his sonorous voice, he was not simply pouring honey in my ears but also laying the foundation of what would become an enduring love for the eclecticism and Catholicism of Urdu poetry.

It was only years later that I began to read Iqbal (1877-1938) with the intention of understanding his poetry and locating him in the context of his time and age. Marking a radical departure from the moralists of the previous generation, Iqbal (revered as ‘Allama’ meaning ‘scholar’) was exhorting the masses to rise against the colonial masters in poems such as ‘*Punjab ke Dehqaan Se*’ and ‘*Farman-e Khuda*’. Forsaking the home-spun wisdom of previous generations of didactic Urdu poets, drawing upon the best resources of a liberal western education, making an impassioned call for a marriage between faith and modernity, he was addressing the Muslims, in particular, to negotiate the choppy waters of a new century and forge a new identity.

Iqbal graduated from the prestigious Government College, Lahore in 1899, worked as a lecturer in philosophy at the same college, went on to study philosophy at Trinity College, Cambridge and in Heidelberg and Munich in Germany and



also took the Bar-at-Law from 1905-1908. He returned to teach for two years before quitting government service altogether, earned no more than a modest livelihood as a lawyer and chose to devote himself entirely to reading and writing. Given his trenchant criticism of the imperial government, he surprisingly enough accepted a Knighthood in 1922. In 1927, he was elected to the Punjab Legislative Council. The philosophical essence of his writings is distilled in a series of six (some-what dense) lectures delivered during 1928-29 at the universities in Aligarh, Hyderabad and Madras entitled ‘Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam’. In 1931, he attended the Round Table Conference in London as a member of the Indian Muslim delegation led by the Aga Khan.

Questioning western enlightenment and English materialism on philosophical and religious grounds, acutely aware of the social undercurrents that conflicted the Muslim intelligentsia, no longer content with the crumbs of lowly employment in the colonial administration or even tokens of recognition and appreciation from the imperial government, Iqbal wanted nothing short of an Islamic Renaissance. In soul-stirring verses, he exhorted the Indian Muslim to hearken back to a glorious past, to listen to voices from Islam's history and heed the call of their faith.

While in his early poetry he spoke of a

united and free India where Hindus and Muslims could co-exist, this syncretism gave way to a somewhat woolly Unitarianism and Individualism. The *Tarana-e-Hind* written in 1904 was followed by the *Tarana-e-Milli* in 1910 showing the progression from *Hindi hain hum watan hai Hindostan hamara* (We are the people of Hind and Hindustan is our homeland) to *Muslim hain hum watan hai sara jahan hamara* (We are Muslims and our homeland is the whole world). Two decades later, in his Presidential Address to the Muslim League meeting of 1930 in Allahabad, he propounded the idea of a separate homeland for the Muslims but his notion of pan-Islamism remained muddled compared to, say, Jamaluddin Afghani, a man he admired for his insight into the history of Muslim thought. His idea of the supra-nationalism of Islam transcended man-made borders (what he called ‘this accursed nationalism’ in a new year's radio address on January 1, 1938), to embrace the ‘brotherhood of man’. Unable to reconcile the differences between East and West much less Reason and Faith, unable also to bolster his undoubtedly superlative poetry with a cogent ideology, Iqbal was at his best when he spoke out against injustice and inequality or in his lyrical descriptions of natural beauty and the Indian tradition of pluralism.

Iqbal's romantic nationalism underwent a change in the light of influences as diverse as Friedrich Nietzsche and Henri Bergson and Karl Marx, producing what Suroor has called the ‘New Testament of Urdu Poetry’. In collection after collection — from *Baal-e-Jibreel* (1935) to *Zarb-e-Kaleem* (1936) to *Armaghan-e-Hijaz* (1938) — he shows the limitless possibilities of human endeavour. In an India lurching towards a dangerous extremism, Iqbal's poetry is illustrative of the pitfalls of excessive devotion to a cause, any cause.

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Out of MYMIND

MEGHNAD DESAI



Beware the voter

ity and there were fears expressed that democracy was in danger. That he was populist, authoritarian and majoritarian. Of course, being the BJP, the accusation of fascism was never far behind — to say nothing of the H word.

Well, I have to disappoint everyone. The recent elections show that Indian democracy is alive and well and kicking. Just a few days ago, exit polls were showing a landslide for BJP. The party had talked about Article 370 in both states.

No local matter was addressed. In Maharashtra, a Bharat Ratna honour for V D Savarkar was given more prominence than recent floods. Haryana has a

car industry in doldrums but did not get a mention.

Certain things are clear. Never take the voters for granted. Voters know not only how to use their vote but also how to lie to pollsters.

There was a report of a BJP *neti* telling voters that his party had put a chip in the EVM which told them who had voted for which party. The Election Commission was going to examine him but it is not the first time this has been said. Maneka Gandhi said something similar during the general election. Either the voters do not believe what they are told or they are not afraid of the consequences of exercising their dem-

ocratic rights. It is obvious that such talk does not enhance a party's reputation with voters.

In Haryana, the BJP has fallen short of what was expected of its team, let alone what was being claimed by exit polls. It has lost its majority and the Congress has 31 seats and the Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) of Dushyant Chautala has won 10 seats.

The miracle in Maharashtra is of course the tenacity and success of Sharad Pawar. He stuck to local issues as he is deeply rooted in the state and the region to which he belongs. We see old names being resilient — Bhupinder Singh Hooda, of course, and now there is

a third generation Chautala winning seats. Manohar Lal Khattar is a newcomer to Haryana as well as to electoral politics. He failed when the case of Ram Rahim blew up and his followers broke the law with impunity. Khattar may have forgotten but the local people have not.

The biggest surprise is the comeback for the Congress. Ever since the general election, it has been in serious crisis. It has lost its young president and got an older one back. Still, its performance shows that there is life in the Grand Old Party.

As for the BJP, it has to take local issues and local voters more seriously.



तीरंदाज

- अश्विनी भटनागर**

एक तो अति विस्तृत, अगम्य अंधकारमय जंगल, उस पर रात्रि का समय। पतंग उस जंगल में रहते है, लेकिन कोई चूँ तक नहीं बोलता है। शब्दमय पृथ्वी की निस्तब्धता का अनुमान किया नहीं जा सकता है; लेकिन उस अनंत शून्य जंगल के सूचीभेध अंधकार का अनुभव किया जा सकता है। सहसा इस रात के समय की भयानक निस्तब्धता को भेद कर ध्वनि आई, ‘मेरा मनोरथ क्या सिद्ध न होगा?’ इस तरह तीन बार वह निस्तब्ध अंधकार आलौड़ित हुआ, ‘तुम्हारा क्या प्रण है?’ उतर मिला, ‘मेरा प्रण ही मेरा जीवन सर्वस्व है।’

प्रतिशब्द हुआ, ‘जीवन तो तुच्छ है, सब इसका त्याग कर सकते है।’

‘तब और क्या है... और क्या होना चाहिए?’

उत्तर मिला, ‘भक्ति।’

संन्यासी आंदोलन और बंगाल अकाल की पृष्ठभूमि पर लिखी बाकिमचंद्र चट्टोपाध्याय की कालजयी कृति ‘आनंदमठ’ की शुरुआत इस प्रकरण से होती है। आनंदमठ 1882 में छपी थी। राष्ट्रभक्ति और हिंदुत्व की प्रधानता के भाव की वजह से इस कृति का विशिष्ट स्थान है। इसके एक गीत ‘वंदे मातरम्’ को राष्ट्रीय गीत का दर्जा भी प्राप्त है।

बाकिमचंद्र की कहानी सूखा ग्रस्त बंगाल के एक गांव पदचिह्ना से शुरू होती है, जहां के जमींदार महेंद्र सिंह अपनी बदहाली से त्रस्त होकर अपनी पत्नी कल्याणी और बेटी सुकुमारी के साथ भोजन की व्यवस्था करने के लिए घर से निकलते हैं, पर अप्रत्याशित उनसे बिछड़ जाते हैं। कल्याणी कुछ डकैतों के चुंगल में फंस जाती है, पर जल्द ही वहां से बच निकलती है। उसकी मुलाकात सत्यानंद से होती है, जो आनंदमठ के प्रधान हैं। वे कल्याणी को अपने मठ में शरण देते हैं और अपने संन्यासी साथी भवानंद को महेंद्र सिंह को ढूंढ़ने भेज देते हैं।

इस बीच ईस्ट इंडिया कंपनी का राजस्व कलकत्ता भेजा जा रहा था और अंग्रेज फौजें जंगल में चौकसी कर रही थीं। महेंद्र और भवानंद को जंगल में घूमता देख कर वे दोनों को पकड़ लेती हैं। उनकी बंदी अवस्था के चलते, संन्यासियों का एक जत्था कंपनी के राजस्व को लूटने के लिए हमला करता है और उन्हें छुड़ा लेता है। मठ की तरफ जाते हुए महेंद्र भवानंद को लूट और हत्या के लिए धिक्कारता है, पर उसकी बातों का जवाब देने के बजाय भवानंद वंदे मातरम गा उठता है।

अपनी धरती को मां की तरह पहचानने का पाठ महेंद्र आनंदमठ में रह कर पढ़ता है और जल्दी ही वह संन्यासियों से एक हो जाता है। वह भी अपनी धरती मां का गौरव और प्रतिष्ठा और उसकी

विज्ञान शिक्षा की बुनियाद

प्रेमपाल शर्मा
माज का विकास विज्ञान के विकास के समांतर हुआ है। इस बात को और विस्तार दें तो सुख, समृद्धि, शांति दुनिया भर में विज्ञान से ही आई है। दुनिया के सभी विकसित, उन्नत राष्ट्र इसीलिए विज्ञान का महत्त्व समझते हैं और इसीलिए अग्रणी बने हुए हैं। गौरतलब है कि पचास के दशक में रूस ने अंतरिक्ष विज्ञान और दूसरे क्षेत्रों में जैसे ही लंबी छलांग लगाई, अमेरिका में हलचल मच गई। वहां तुरंत विज्ञान पढ़ने-पढ़ाने और शोध को राष्ट्रीय प्राथमिकता में रखा गया और दूसरे विश्वयुद्ध के बाद उस शीत युद्ध में धीरे-धीरे अमेरिका विज्ञान के बूते ही बाजी मारता चला गया। न केवल दूसरे विश्वयुद्ध के दौर से जर्मनी के वैज्ञानिक आइंस्टाइन आदि अमेरिका पहुंचते चले गए, बल्कि उसके बाद से आज तक अमेरिका दुनिया के वैज्ञानिकों की पहली प्राथमिकता बना हुआ है। भारत के हर्गोविंद खुराना, चंद्रशेखर, वेंकटराम कृष्णा आदि अमेरिकी शिक्षा के बूते ही दुनिया में नाम कमा पाए हैं। हम लगभग तीस वर्ष से लगातार यह देखते-सुनते आ रहे हैं कि चीन के विश्वविद्यालय विज्ञान के क्षेत्र में बहुत तेजी से आगे बढ़ रहे हैं। पेटेंट और नई खोजों के पैमानों से नापा जाए तो आज चीन की स्थिति अमेरिका से भी आगे है। विज्ञान और तकनीक के बूते ही छोटा-सा इजराइल कैसे अपनी धाक जमाए हुए है। जापान तो है ही पिछले लगभग सौ सालों से सबसे मजबूत। पड़ोसी चीन की ही बात करें, तो उन्होंने अपनी स्कूली शिक्षा से लेकर विश्वविद्यालय तक को बदला है और इसीलिए दुनिया भर के शीर्ष सौ विश्वविद्यालयों में पांच से ज्यादा चीन के होते हैं और हम पहले पांच सौ में भी मुश्किल से आ पाते हैं।

आजादी के बाद नारों और दीवारों पर तो वैज्ञानिक चेतना की बातें कही गईं, लेकिन न शिक्षा में कोई बुनियादी परिवर्तन आया और न इसी वजह से समाज में। माना हम बड़ा देश है, यहां कई जटिलताएं हैं, लेकिन अगर अंधेरा बढ़ता ही जाए, तो हमें पूरी नीति की समीक्षा की जरूरत है। पिछली सरकार ज्ञान आयोग और उसकी अंग्रेजी पड़ाने, लादने की जिद से इतनी व्यस्त थी कि सरकारी शिक्षा निजी स्कूलों की तरफ तो चली गई, उपलब्धि के नाम पर कुछ नहीं मिला। यानी अंग्रेजी ठीक करने के चक्कर में दुनिया के विश्वविद्यालयों की रैंकिंग में हम और पीछे होते गए। इसलिए पहले तो यह भ्रम हटाना होगा कि अंग्रेजी के बूते आप विश्वविद्यालयों को ठीक कर सकते हैं। कम से कम वर्तमान सरकार अंग्रेजी की वैसी दीवानी नहीं है और अगर विज्ञान को सही समझ पाए, तो मजबूत इच्छाशक्ति भी रखती है।

मौजूदा सरकार के पांच वर्ष पूरे हो चुके हैं। निश्चित रूप से समझने में समय लगता है, लेकिन बड़े परिवर्तन उस प्रक्रिया से ही संभव है जैसे दुनिया के राष्ट्रों ने संभव किए हैं। पांच सौ वर्ष पहले का यूरोप इसी विज्ञान के बूते भारत, चीन जैसी पुरानी सभ्यताओं को पीछे छोड़ता हुआ आगे निकल गया और आज भी उसी रफ्तार से आगे बढ़ रहा है। सभ्यता तो चीन की भी पुरानी है, लेकिन उसे मौजूदा विज्ञान से कोई परहेज नहीं है। उसने मौजूदा विज्ञान के बूते अपनी स्थिति बहुत मजबूत की है। हमारा अतीत निश्चित रूप से गौरवशाली रहा है। शून्य की खोज, आग्नेय, वराहमिहिर, सुश्रुत के कामों पर हमें गर्व है, लेकिन

साल पहले दुनिया की सभ्यताएं बहुत अधिकसित दौर में थीं। उसके बरखस हम आगे थे और अगर हमें फिर से आगे होना है, तो कुछ अपनी पुरानी सभ्यताओं से उठाएं, उन्हें जांचे-परखें, दुनिया के सामने प्रमाणित करें और साथ ही

दुनिया के अनुभवों को साथ लेकर आगे बढ़ें। हम महान थे, विज्ञान ऐसी किसी स्थापना को नहीं मानता। यह बार-बार उसका प्रमाण मांगता है। और इसके लिए हमारे स्कूली पाठ्यक्रम में पूरा बदलाव चाहिए। विज्ञान श्रद्धा, भक्ति का नाम नहीं है। विज्ञान की शुरुआत ही शंका, संदेह से होती है। यह उसकी बुनियाद है। डाल्टन ने कहा- एटम सबसे छोटी इकाई है। दूसरे विज्ञानकों ने उसे तोड़ दिया कि नहीं, छोटी इकाईं प्रोटॉन, इलेक्ट्रॉन, न्यूट्रॉन हैं। दूसरे वैज्ञानिकों ने उसे और विखंडित कर दिया। विज्ञान की लाखों बातें ऐसे ही प्रश्नों, शंकाओं, बहसों से आगे बढ़ी हैं।

हर धर्म और उसकी बातें निजीजीवता की हद तक वही खड़ी रहती हैं, जबकि विज्ञान निरंतर बदलने वाली प्रक्रिया है। इस पक्ष पर तुरंत काम करने की जरूरत है। स्कूली बच्चे तर्कशिल बनेंगे, अपने आसपास की समस्याओं पर प्रश्न करना, उनसे जुझना सीखेंगे, उनके हल निकालेंगे और इस प्रक्रिया को जारी रखते हुए हमारे विश्वविद्यालय दुनिया की खोजों से सीखते हुए आगे बढ़ेंगे। अगर जरूरत हो तो पांच वर्ष तक सिर्फ विज्ञान की शिक्षा ही दी जाए, तो देश का कायापलट हो सकता है। यह केवल शिक्षा का मामला नहीं है, पूरे समाज को बदलने के लिए ऐसे ही कदमों की जरूरत है।

बुनियादी सामाजिक प्रश्न की तरफ लौटते हैं। जाति और धर्म के भेद-विभेद और उनसे उत्पन्न समस्याओं से पूरा देश जुझ रहा है। विज्ञान की समझ कहती है कि न केवल मनुष्य, बल्कि सभी जीवधारियों के सतानबे फीसद जीन समान होते हैं, यानी तीन फीसद की भिन्नता ही करोड़ों जीवों को अलग करती है। तो फिर मनुष्य की जाति, धर्म के भेद क्या नकली, बनावटी नहीं है? जब ऐसी तार्किक स्थापना हमारे बचपन में बैदा दी जाए, तो उसे कोई भी राजनीति, कोई भी धर्मगुरु अपने स्वार्थों के लिए इस्तेमाल नहीं कर सकता।

इन्हीं सब कारणों से संयुक्त राष्ट्र ने 2001 से दुनिया भर में विश्व विज्ञान दिवस प्रतिवर्ष दस नवंबर को मनाने का फैसला किया, जिससे कि सभी देश विज्ञान के तार्किक रास्ते से सुख, समृद्धि और विकास की तरफ अग्रसर हो सकें। क्या तीन सौ वर्ष पहले हम इतने सुखीं थे? चेचक से लाखों मर जाते थे। इंग्लैंड के डॉक्टर जीनर ने रास्ता खोजा और पूरी दुनिया आज चेचक से मुक्त हो गई है। क्या यह किसी माता, देवी या पीर-पैगंबर की पूजा से संभव हो सकता है? पोलियो का कीटाणु दुनिया भर में लाखों लोगों को पंगु बना देता था, आज हम उससे मुक्त हैं। पेंसिलीन, हैजा के टीके, बड़ी से बड़ी सर्जरी, केसर से पार पाना, यानी विज्ञान के बूते दुनिया आराम की जिंदगी जी रही है और इसीलिए मनुष्य की औसत आयु निरंतर बढ़ रही है। भारत का ही उदाहरण लें, तो आजादी के वक्त औसत आयु सिर्फ बर्तीस वर्ष थी, आज सत्तर वर्ष के करीब है। यह सिर्फ विज्ञान ने संभव करके दिखाया है। इसलिए सभी सरकारों का दायित्व है कुछ दिनों के लिए दूसरी बहसों को एक तरफ रख कर सिर्फ विज्ञान में दुनिया के देशों की बराबरी करने की तरकीब निकालें। इससे हमारे समाज में तो बुनियादी परिवर्तन आएगा ही, हमें अरबों रुपए के हथियार भी आयात नहीं करने पड़ेंगे, और न जीवन रक्षक दवाएं आयात करने होंगी, जो हमारी अर्थव्यवस्था को कमर तोड़ रही हैं।

विज्ञान शिक्षा की तार्किकता और दर्शन से हमारे सामाजिक विज्ञान, इतिहास, राजनीति विज्ञान के शोध भी बदलेंगे और सही मायनों में हमारे विश्वविद्यालय भी। फिर हमारे बच्चे अमेरिका, इंग्लैंड नहीं भागेंगे। हमारे अतीत में जो भी विज्ञान की कसौटी पर अच्छा है उसे भी सहर्ष अपनाएं और दुनिया के मौजूदा ज्ञान को भी।

ज्ञानमार्ग, भक्तिमार्ग!

संपन्नता को पुनर्स्थापित करने का व्रत लेता है। अंत में, सत्यानंद के नेतृत्व में संयासी समुदाय अंग्रेजी फौज को बुरी तरह परास्त करता है और खजाना अपने आधीन कर लेता है। यह परम वीरता और उल्लास का क्षण था, जिसमें हिंदू राष्ट्र की पहली स्वर्णिम किरण क्षितिज पर साफ दिख रही थी, पर आनंदमठ की कहानी एक आखिरी मोड़ लेती है।

अंतिम अंश इस प्रकार है :
‘चिकित्सक बोले- ‘सत्यानंद! आज माघी पूर्णिमा है।’
सत्यानंद- ‘चलिए मैं तैयार हूं। किंतु महात्मन्। मेरे एक संदेह को दूर कीजिए। मैंने क्या इसीलिए युद्ध-जय कर सनातन-धर्म की पताका फहराई थी?’
जो आए थे, उन्होंने कहा- ‘तुम्हारा कार्य सिद्ध हो गया, मुसलिम राज्य ध्वंस हो चुका।’

सत्यानंद की दोनों आंखों से जलधारा बहने लगी। उन्होंने सामने जननी-जन्मभूमि की प्रतिमा की तरफ देख, हाथ जोड़ कर कहा- ‘हाय माता! तुम्हारा उद्धार न कर सका। तू फिर म्लेच्छों के हाथ में पड़ेगी। संतानों के अपराध को क्षमा कर दो मां। रणक्षेत्र में मेरी मृत्यु क्यों न हो गई?’

अब तुम्हारी यहां कोई जरूरत नहीं, अनर्थक प्राणहत्या की आवश्यकता नहीं!’
सत्यानंद- ‘मुसलिम राज्य ध्वंस अवश्य हुआ है, किंतु अभी हिंदू राज्य स्थापित हुआ नहीं है। अब भी कलकत्ते में अंगरेज प्रबल है।’
वे बोले- ‘अभी हिंदू-राज्य स्थापित न होगा। तुम्हारे रहने से अनर्थक प्राणी-हत्या होगी, अतएव चलो!’
यह सुन कर सत्यानंद तीव्र मर्म-पीड़ा से कातर हुए, बोले- ‘प्रभो! यदि हिंदू-राज्य स्थापित न होगा, तो कौन राज्य होगा, क्या फिर मुसलिम-राज्य होगा?’
उन्होंने कहा- ‘नहीं, अब अंगरेज-राज्य होगा।’
सत्यानंद की दोनों आंखों से जलधारा बहने लगी। उन्होंने सामने जननी-जन्मभूमि की प्रतिमा की तरफ देख हाथ जोड़ कर कहा- ‘हाय माता! तुम्हारा उद्धार न कर सका। तू फिर म्लेच्छों के हाथ में पड़ेगी। संतानों के अपराध को क्षमा कर दो मां। रणक्षेत्र में मेरी मृत्यु क्यों न हो गई?’

महात्मा ने कहा- ‘सत्यानंद कातर न हो। तुमने बुद्धि विभ्रम से दस्यु वृत्ति द्वारा घन संचय कर रण में विजय ली है। पाप का कभी पवित्र फल नहीं होता। अतएव तुम लोग देश-उद्धार नहीं कर सकोगे। और अब जो कुछ होगा, अच्छा होगा। अंगरेजों के बिना राजा हुए सनातन धर्म का उद्धार नहीं हो सकेगा। महापुरुषों ने जिस प्रकार समझाया है, मैं उसी प्रकार समझाता हूँ- ध्यान देकर सुनो। तैत्तिरीय कौटि देवताओं का पूजन सनातन धर्म नहीं है। वह एक तरह का लौकिक निरूप-धर्म है, हिंदू धर्म लुप्त हो गया है। प्रकृति हिंदू धर्म

जि

स दिन महाराष्ट्र और हरियाणा के नतीजे आए थे पिछले सप्ताह, मीर तकी मीर का एक शेर बहुत गूद आया मुझे। यह शेर है : ‘जिस पर कौंटा उद्योग में हजारों नौकरियों के जाने की। जब पंजाब और महाराष्ट्र कोआर्पेटिव बैंक (पीएमसी) में घोड़ला सामने आया और लोगों के इस सदमे से मरने की खबरें आने लगीं, तो

को सबसे महत्त्वपूर्ण मुद्दा बनाने की, लेकिन उनकी कोशिशें नाकाम रहीं। आम लोगों से मैंने जब इसे समाप्त किए जाने के बारे में पूछा तो अक्सर जवाब मिला कि उनको ज्यादा चिंता थी कौंटो उद्योग में हजारों नौकरियों के जाने की। जब पंजाब और महाराष्ट्र कोआर्पेटिव बैंक (पीएमसी) में घोड़ला सामने आया और लोगों के इस सदमे से मरने की खबरें आने लगीं, तो जब प्रधानमंत्री ने उस शाम को भारतीय जनता पार्टी के मुख्यालय में अपने कार्यकर्ताओं को संबोधित करते समय कहा कि उनको गर्व होना चाहिए कि इन दोनों राज्यों में पांच साल काम करने के बाद उनकी सरकारें फिर से लौट कर आई हैं। यथार्थ कुछ और है और ऐसा लगा जैसे मोदी इस यथार्थ का सामना करने के बजाय उससे दूर भागना चाहते हैं। क्या इसलिए कि उनको भी अहसास होने लगा है कि सत्ता नाजुक चीज है? कहने को तो भारतीय जनता पार्टी की जीत हुई है दोनों राज्यों में, लेकिन इन जीत का विरोधपण अगर किया जाए, तो साफ दिखने लगते हैं इस जीत में हार के कुछ छिपे हुए आसार। इसलिए कि जबसे नरेंद्र मोदी का दूसरा कार्यकाल शुरू हुआ है तबसे भारतीय जनता पार्टी के बड़े नेताओं में एक अजीब-सा घमंड नजर आने लगा है जैसे कि अब उनको हराने वाला कोई नहीं रहा है। यह घमंड चुनाव अभियान में अहंकार बन गया था, जिसके कारण ऐसा लगा जैसे जमीन से इन आला नेताओं का रिश्ता टूट गया हो। सो, जहां सबसे बड़े मुद्दे थे आर्थिक मंदी से जुड़े हुए, वहां चुनाव अभियान का सबसे बड़ा मुद्दा बनाया उन्होंने अनुच्छेद 370 हटाने को। प्रधानमंत्री ने अपने हर भाषण में अपने प्रतिद्वंद्वियों को चुनौती दी कि अगर इस धारा को हटाना उनको पसंद नहीं है तो खुल कर क्यों नहीं कहते हैं कि इसको वापस लाएं। जवाब उनको मिला शरद पावर से, जिन्होंने कहा कि इसके हटने न हटने से महाराष्ट्र को कोई मतलब नहीं है, क्योंकि इस राज्य के किसानों में क्षमता ही नहीं है कश्मीर में जाकर जमीन खरीदने की।

महाराष्ट्र में रहती हूं, सो यकीन मानिए जब मैं कहती हूं कि प्रधानमंत्री और अमित शाह ने बहुत कोशिश की अनुच्छेद 370

को सबसे महत्त्वपूर्ण मुद्दा बनाने की, लेकिन उनकी कोशिशें नाकाम रहीं। आम लोगों से मैंने जब इसे समाप्त किए जाने के बारे में पूछा तो अक्सर जवाब मिला कि उनको ज्यादा चिंता थी कौंटो उद्योग में हजारों नौकरियों के जाने की। जब पंजाब और महाराष्ट्र कोआर्पेटिव बैंक (पीएमसी) में घोड़ला सामने आया और लोगों के इस सदमे से मरने की खबरें आने लगीं, तो



वक्त की नब्ब

- तवलीन सिंह**

महाराष्ट्र और हरियाणा के चुनावों में अनुच्छेद तीन सौ सत्तर को हथियार बना कर इस्तेमाल करना गलत था। ऐसा करने से सवाल पूछने वालों की तादाद बढ़ी है।

आर्थिक मंदी और भी बड़ा मुद्दा बन गई थी, लेकिन इसको अनदेखा करके भारतीय जनता पार्टी के राजनेताओं ने अनुच्छेद 370 की ही रट लगाए रखी। ऐसे पेश आए जैसे अनुच्छेद 370 हटाए जाने का विरोध करना देशद्रोह के समान हो।

देशभक्ति एक ऐसी भावना है, जो दिल से निकलती है, उसे जबदस्ती नहीं थोपा जा सकता। मगर मोदी के इस दूसरे शासनकाल में देशभक्ति को जबदस्ती थोपने की लगातार कोशिश होती आई है। कश्मीर का विशेष दर्जा हटाए जाना जैसे परीक्षा बन गई है देशभक्ति की, बिना यह देखे कि जो लोग इस विशेष दर्जे को हटाए जाने के पक्ष में हैं उनको भी अब चिंता होने लगी है कि कश्मीर घाटी में शांति बहाल करने के लिए मोदी सरकार की कोई रणनीति है भी या नहीं, और अगर नहीं है तो क्यों नहीं है।

कश्मीर को अब हम अपना घरेलू मुद्दा नहीं कह सकते हैं।

आधी थाली की उदासी

थे, जबकि भाजपा अहंकार और प्रचार में बह गई थी। जनता चतुर है। उसने सबको संतुलन में ला दिया। यह एक बड़े परिवर्तन की शुरुआत है।

इसके बाद के सीन कुछ अजीब दिखे। जिस वक्त फडणवीस बोल रहे थे, ठीक उसी वक्त पीएम वाराणसी के लोगों को संबोधित करते दिखे। हम समझे कि अब चैनल पीएम के संबोधन को वरीयता देंगे, लेकिन ऐसा न हुआ। कई चैनलों ने ‘स्प्लिट स्क्रीन’ करके दिखाना शुरू किया। लेकिन कई चैनलों में फडणवीस बोलते दिखते रहे और पीएम को साइलेंट

बाखबर
सुरेश प्रतोरि

सबसे स्पर्धात्मक दृश्य महाराष्ट्र के चुनावों के बाद दिखे। पहले उद्धव ठाकरे ने प्रेस को बताया कि पिछले चुनाव के पहले भाजपा अध्यक्ष घर आए थे, तब उनके साथ महाराष्ट्र में ‘फिफ्टी-फिफ्टी सीएम’ वाले फार्मूले पर सहमति हुई थी। हम उस पर कायम हैं।

दिखाते रहे! हमें तो यह शुद्ध बदतमीजी लगी! इन परिणामों ने बेचारे लड्डुओं को एकदम भूमिका विहीन कर दिया।

सुबह सुबह एक हिंदी चैनल एक जगह बड़े उत्साह से बहुत से लड्डू बनते दिखा रहा था, लेकिन शाम तक उसने भी लड्डुओं की थालियां तक गाबब कर दीं। सिर्फ मुंबई में कुछ पटाखे फटते और ढोल बजते सुनाई दिए, लेकिन हरियाणा में न लड्डू दिखे, न बहुत ढोल-गुगाई! शायद इसी वजह से भाजपा कार्यकर्ताओं को हौसला बढ़ाने के लिए भाजपा के मुख्यालय में एक धन्यवाद सभा की गई, जिसमें भाजपा के केंद्रीय नेताओं ने कार्यकर्ताओं को प्रबोधा। पहली बार कार्यकर्ताओं में पुराने वाला वह जोश-खरोश नहीं

ज्ञानात्मक-कार्यात्मक नहीं। जो अंतर्विषयक ज्ञान है, वही सनातन धर्म का प्रधान अंग हैं। लेकिन बिना पहले वहिविषयक ज्ञान हुए अंतर्विषयक ज्ञान असंभव है। स्थूल देखे बिना सूक्ष्म की पहचान ही नहीं हो सकती। बहुत दिनों से इस देश में वहिविषयक ज्ञान लुप्त हो चुका है- इसीलिए वास्तविक सनातन धर्म का भी लोप हो गया है। सनातन धर्म के उद्धार के लिए पहले वहिविषयक ज्ञान-प्रचार की आवश्यकता है। इस देश में इस समय वह वहिविषयक ज्ञान नहीं है- सिखाने वाला भी कोई नहीं, अतएव बाहरी देशों से वहिविषयक ज्ञान भारत में फिर लाना पड़ेगा। अंग्रेज उस ज्ञान के प्रकांड पंडित हैं- लोकशिक्षा में बड़े पटू हैं। अत: अंग्रेज के ही राजा होने से, अंग्रेजी की शिक्षा से स्वत: वह ज्ञान उत्पन्न होगा! जब तक उस ज्ञान से हिंदू ज्ञानवान, गुणवान और बलवान न होंगे अंगरेज राज्य रहेगा। उस राज्य में प्रजा सुखी होगी, निष्कटक धर्माचरण होंगे। अंगरेजों से बिना युद्ध किए ही, निरस्त्र होकर मरे साथ चलो।

सत्यानंद ने कहा- ‘महात्मन्! यदि ऐसा ही था, अगर अंग्रेजों को ही राजा बनाना था, तो हम लोगों को इस कार्य में प्रवृत्त करने की क्या आवश्यकता थी?’

महापुरुष ने कहा- ‘अंग्रेज उस समय बनिया थे- अर्थ संग्रह पर ही उनका ध्यान था। अब संतानों (संन्यासियों) के कारण ही वे राज्य-शासन हाथ में लेंगे, क्योंकि बिना राजत्व किए अर्थ-संग्रह नहीं हो सकता। अंगरेज राजदंड लें, इसलिए संतानों का विद्रोह हुआ है। अब आओ, स्वयं ज्ञानलाभ कर दिव्य चक्षुओं से सब देखो, समझो।’

सत्यानंद- ‘हे महात्मा। मैं ज्ञान लाभ की आकांक्षा नहीं रखता- ज्ञान की मुझे आवश्यकता नहीं। मैंने जो व्रत लिया है, उसी का पालन करूंगा। आशीर्वाद दीजिए कि मेरा मातृभक्ति अचल हो!’

महापुरुष- ‘शत्रु सफल हो गया- तुमने माता का मंगल साधन मवाल-स्थान किया- अंग्रेज राज्य तुम्ही लोगों द्वारा स्थापित समझो। युद्ध विग्रह का त्याग करो- कृषि में नियुक्त हो, जिससे पृथ्वी शस्य शालिनी हो, लोगों की श्रीवृद्धि हो।’

सत्यानंद को आंखों से आंसू निकलने लगे, बोले- ‘माता को शत्रु-रक्त से शस्यशालिनी करू?’
महापुरुष- ‘शत्रु कौन है? शत्रु अब कोई नहीं, अंगरेज हमारे मित्र हैं। फिर अंगरेजों से युद्ध कर अंत में विजयी हो- ऐसी अभी किसी की शक्ति नहीं है।’

सत्यानंद- ‘न हो, यहीं माता के सामने मैं अपना बलिदान चढ़ा दूंगा।’

महापुरुष- ‘आजानवश! चलो, पहले ज्ञानलाभ करो। हिमालय-शिखर पर मातृ-मंदिर है, वहीं तुम्हें माता की मूर्ति प्रत्यक्ष होगी।’

यह कह कर महापुरुष ने सत्यानंद का हाथ पकड़ लिया। कैसी अपूर्व शोभा थी। उस गंभीर निस्तब्ध रात्रि में विराट चतुर्भुज विशु प्रतिमा के सामने दोनों महापुरुष हाथ पकड़े खड़े थे। किसको किसने पकड़ा है? ज्ञान ने भक्ति का हाथ पकड़ा है, धर्म के हाथ में कर्म का हाथ है, विजर्सन ने प्रतिष्ठा का हाथ पकड़ा है। सत्यानंद ही शांति है- महापुरुष ही कल्याण है- सत्यानंद प्रतिष्ठा है- महापुरुष विसर्जन है। विसर्जन ने आकर प्रतिष्ठा को साथ ले लिया।

असलियत से आंख न चुराइए

इसका अंतरराष्ट्रीयकरण हो चुका है। जब तक कश्मीर के बड़े राजनेता नजरबंद रहते हैं, जब तक घाटी में कर्फ्यू हर दूसरे दिन लगात रहता है, तब तक दुनिया सवाल उठाती रहेगी और भारत की बदनामी होती रहेगी, जैसे वॉशिंगटन में पिछले सप्ताह तब हुई जब अमेरिका की एक कांग्रेस समिति ने दक्षिण एशिया में मानवाधिकारों के उल्लंघन पर चर्चा की। चर्चा सिर्फ कश्मीर

घाटी पर हुई। न किसी ने बलूचिस्तान का जिक्र किया और न ही किसी ने ध्यान दिलाया पाकिस्तान में शिया मुसलमानों के साथ हो रहे जुल्म की तरफ। सिर्फ कश्मीर की बातें हुईं, जिनको सुन कर ऐसा लगा कि भारत एक ऐसा देश है, जिसमें लोकतंत्र नहीं तानाशाही है। ऐसी चर्चाएं होती रहेंगी, जब तक कश्मीर घाटी में शांति बहाल नहीं होती और वह तभी होगी जब आम कश्मीरी को महसूस होने लगेगा कि वास्तव में अनुच्छेद 370 के हटने से उसकी भलाई है। तब तक मोदी सरकार की कश्मीर नीति पर सवाल पूछे जाएंगे।

महाराष्ट्र और हरियाणा के चुनावों में अनुच्छेद तीन सौ सत्तर को हथियार बना कर इस्तेमाल करना गलत था। ऐसा करने से सवाल पूछने वालों की तादाद बढ़ी है। मेरी राय है कि

इस अनुच्छेद को कभी न कभी तो हटाना ही जाना था, लेकिन मुझे भी चिंता होने लगी है कि अगले कदम के बारे में मोदी सरकार ने अभी तक सोचा ही नहीं है। कभी न कभी तो कर्फ्यू हटाना पड़ेगा घाटी से, कभी न कभी तो कश्मीर के बड़े राजनेताओं को रिहा करना पड़ेगा, तब क्या होगा? क्या कोई रणनीति बनी है शांति वापस लाने की? इन सवालों का वास्ता कश्मीर से है, किसी अन्य राज्य के चुनावों से नहीं।

हर राज्य के अपने स्थानीय मुद्दे होते हैं, जिनको उठाए बगैर चुनाव बेमतलब से हो जाते हैं आम मतदाता की नजरों में। सो, ऐसा हुआ है इन विधानसभा चुनावों में और पहली बार ऐसा लगने लगा है कि मोदी-शाह के आलीशान चुनावी रथ में थोड़ी-सी कमजोरी आ गई है। नहीं आई होती, तो लोकसभा चुनावों में शानदार जीत हासिल करने के कुछ ही महीनों बाद महाराष्ट्र और हरियाणा में कमजोरियां न दिखने लगी होतीं।

आधी थाली की उदासी

दिखा, जो अक्सर ऐसे अवसरों पर अक्सर दिखता रहा है।
‘यों चिंदबरम इडी की गिरफ्त में हैं, अगर ज्यों ही चैनलों के कैमरे चिंदबरम की ओर लफटें, त्यों ही उधरने एक लाइन वाला तीर चला कर खबर बना दी कि ‘खामोश देश भक्ति ने पहलवान छाप राष्ट्रवाद को पटखनी दी है।’

इस सप्ताह साथियों को सबसे अधिक निराश किया तो नोबेल प्राप्त भाई अभिजीत बनर्जी ने। एक चैनल ने एक बातचीत का प्रसारण कर उनके लच्छन पहले ही जाता दिए थे कि भाई जी लेफ्ट-राइट करने की जगह एकदम ‘प्रेक्टिकल’ बंदे हैं और ‘यादृच्छिक नियंत्रित परीक्षण’ नामक ‘विकासमूलक तकनीक’ के जरिए केंद्र और राज्य सरकारों की सेवा के लिए तैयार हैं। कथित जेएनयू बांड ‘क्रांतिकारिता’ पीएम से भेंट करने के बाद पीएम को मुक्तकंठ से प्रशंसा करती दिखी।

आश्चर्य कि किसी चैनल ने पलट कर जेएनयू के क्रांतिकारी साथियों से न पूछा कि आदर्शपूर्ण के प्रति अब आपके क्या विचार हैं?

सबसे स्पर्धात्मक दृश्य महाराष्ट्र के चुनावों के बाद दिखे। पहले उद्धव ठाकरे ने प्रेस को बताया कि पिछले चुनाव के पहले भाजपा अध्यक्ष घर आए थे, तब उनके साथ महाराष्ट्र में ‘फिफ्टी-फिफ्टी सीएम’ वाले फार्मूले पर सहमति हुई थी। हम उस पर कायम हैं। इसका मतलब था कि पहले ढाई साल शिवसेना का सीएम रहेगा, बाकी ढाई बरस भाजपा का सीएम रहेगा। इसी के तहत शिवसेना ने तो चुनाव के पहले ही आदित्य ठाकरे को सीएम बनाने की बात कह दी थी। हाय! कहां पूरी थाली और कहां आधी थाली! यह है : आधी थाली की उदासी!

इस बीच एक दिन केंद्रीय कैबिनेट ने दिल्ली की लगभग सत्रह सौ अनधिकृत कॉलोनियों को अधिकृत करने का एलान कर दिया। इसका चुनावी हेतु तब और साफ हुआ, जब केंद्रीय शहरी विकास मंत्री ने इस फैसले की वजाहत करते हुए कहा कि इस फैसले से दिल्ली के चालीस से पचास लाख लोग लाभान्वित होंगे! यानी इस हाथ ले उस हाथ दे!

लेकिन, ध्यान रहे कि दिल्ली के ‘दादा’ केजरीवाल हैं और वे कोई ‘हूडा’ या ‘पवार’ नहीं हैं!